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ABSTRACT

An study was conducted in an adult education center and a community school in Scotland to determine the perceived effectiveness of a range of methods for teaching English. Data were collected through semistructured interviews, observation of teaching, course documents, and informal conversations with 47 students and 2 teachers. Findings included the following: (1) teachers and students believed that the course objectives included passing the O-level exam, learning skills that could be transferred to everyday life, increasing powers of self-expression, and acquiring an appreciation of literature; (2) methods used in the classes included teacher-centered classwork, whole-class discussion, group work, and assessment of individual written work; (3) 60 percent of the students passed the examination; and (4) students' objectives were preparation for the exam, acquisition of writing and oral skills, expanding capabilities, and the social experience. (The document includes nine references and outlines for the two English courses.) (CML)

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PERCEPTIONS OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING METHODS IN 'O' GRADE ENGLISH COURSES FOR ADULTS

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SCRE PROJECT REPORTS

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PREFACE

This case-study of teaching and learning in two 'O' Grade English courses is part of a larger research project on teaching and learning in adult education. The aim of the research is to identify teaching methods which adult learners and their tutors perceive as effective across a range of different kinds of courses. We wish to emphasise that the focus of the research is on teaching methods. By reporting adult learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of methods we are able to speculate a little about how adults learn. However, the research was not directed at exploring this. The concern was to describe the teaching methods in use, explore the reasons for their use and explore perceptions of effectiveness. We have little to say about, for example, what the adult learners were bringing to their courses in terms of motivation, previous experience or knowledge.

In due course our final report will draw comparisons across the range of courses studied. However, it was thought that the case-study reports of specific subject areas would be of interest to those working in these areas.

The report is deliberately brief and is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 provides descriptive information about the focus of the research, the particular courses studied and the research methods used. Chapter 2 concentrates on the teaching methods which have been perceived as effective and identifies four main dimensions of effectiveness for students: preparation for an exam qualification, acquisition of skills, expanding capabilities and a social experience. Chapter 3 looks beyond teaching methods to a range of other factors identified by our respondents, as affecting effective teaching. Chapter 4 contains the main findings and a summary. Finally we include, as brief appendices, descriptions of course content and teaching approach.

This report would not have been possible without the help and co-operation of many people. We are particularly grateful to the adult students and their teachers for putting up with us observing their classrooms and for sparing time to be interviewed. We are grateful too, to Mavis Gutu who typed the report quickly and accurately. Responsibility for the content rests with the authors and the report does not necessarily represent the views either of SCRE or of SED who funded the research.

Summary

A brief summary is provided as a reference and as a guide to the main body of the report. Details of the research design and methods are contained in Chapter 1. It is important to refer to this chapter to understand the claims that can be made about the research. The detailed study of a small number of examples means that we can raise points for consideration by adult educators, but we cannot generalise about all 'O' Grade English courses. In Chapter 4 we summarise our findings.

Tutor and Student Aims	It was clear from interviews, both with tutors and students, that they believed there were a greater number of aims than exam success alone. These included the learning of skills which could be transferred to everyday life, increasing powers of self-expression and acquiring an interest in, and appreciation of literature.	*Chapter 2*
Needs underlying methods	Tutors referred to three basic areas as a priority in responding to student needs. These were, stimulating the organisation of ideas through practice, promoting a sense of achievement and providing a comfortable and well-motivated learning environment.	*Chapter 2*
The teaching methods	A variety of methods were employed and, although there might be different emphasis, most methods were common to all three tutors observed. These were: tutor-centred 'classwork'; whole-class discussion; group work; and assessment of individual written work.	*Chapter 2*
Effectiveness as preparation for the exam	The combined results of the courses produced a pass rate of 60%. In a narrow sense, this is one clear piece of data which shows the effectiveness of the courses. However, few students saw an exam qualification as the only reason for attending the course, although they felt that it did provide them with a clear-cut goal and a structure to the learning activity.	*Chapter 2*
Effectiveness as acquisition of skills	There were several points raised by students concerning their perception of effectiveness with regard to acquisition of skills. They appeared to centre on three areas: the need for practice; the desire to learn from the ideas of other students, as well as the tutor; the importance of a supportive attitude from the tutor which aided self-confidence.	*Chapter 2*
Effectiveness as expanding capabilities	It seemed important that courses offered students the opportunity for the realisation of capabilities and the growth of confidence to express new-found skills. Once they begin to recognise such capabilities this provides a strong motivating force.	*Chapter 2*
Effectiveness as provision of a social experience	Interaction between students was perceived, by them, as an important aid to their learning. They also commented on the significance of the course in enriching their outside activities.	*Chapter 2*

Attracting students and guidance	Organisers of both courses were concerned to provide sufficient opportunities for guidance and were aware of certain weaknesses. They saw guidance as essential, both before and during the course. Students on one course had, in effect, formed their own support group and this was valued by tutor and students alike.	*Chapter 3*
Tutor motivation	Many students saw the tutor as the central influence on the course and co-ordinators emphasised the value of their role. Tutors, for their part, spoke with enthusiasm about the teaching of adults. However, in order for tutors to maintain their motivation, they reported that they needed opportunities to exchange ideas through in-service activities. They also maintained that a high drop-out rate and a dominant exam syllabus could both lessen their interest in teaching the subject.	*Chapter 3*
A mixture of adults and school pupils	Reactions to the mixing of adults and school pupils on one course were mostly favourable although this was not considered a major issue, either by the tutor or the students.	*Chapter 3*
Resources	Lack of sufficient resources in staffing was considered a major concern by tutors and co-ordinators alike.	*Chapter 3*

We hoped it would be useful to pose some questions for adult educators to consider in relation to their own work. These questions arise from comments made by tutors and students about their experiences. They are intended to provide a stimulus to discussion on course planning and are repeated at the end of Chapter 4 as part of our conclusion.

FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR THOSE PLANNING COURSES

Pre-course

When students choose a course, is there sufficient aid available to help them understand the commitment which will be required of them?

Is there an opportunity for students to change to a more suitable course within the first few weeks?

When students first join a class, what provision is there for helping them to understand the culture of the institution they are attending?

Do social activities form an integral part of the planning of the course?

The Course Itself

Are there opportunities to develop the sense of responsibility and commitment of adults to the benefit of the institution?

Are adults given support in developing self-help through group activities?

How are problems over work and family commitments dealt with during the course?

What are the best ways to stimulate a positive contribution from all course members?

Are tutors given sufficient opportunity to meet and exchange views with other adult educators in order to sustain their motivation?

Course Follow-up

Are students contacted who do not complete the course and is there any method of recording their reasons for dropping out?

Do students understand how they might continue their learning in the subject and are they offered guidance in order to discuss possibilities?

BACKGROUND

This chapter describes the focus of the research, the two courses studied, the research methods used and the sample of students and tutors who took part in the research.

THE FOCUS OF THE RESEARCH

These case-studies are part of a larger research project on teaching and learning in adult education. The research is studying teaching and learning in Business Studies, Computer Studies, Management Studies, and Personal Effectiveness courses, as well as 'O' Grade English. The overall aim of the research is to provide a picture of the teaching methods used in these various courses and to report the adult students' perceptions of the effectiveness of these methods.

In the past twenty years or so there has been an increased intensity in the debate about whether distinctions should be drawn between the processes involved in educating children and those involved in educating adults. Knowles (1970) advocated the use of the term 'andragogy' as distinct from pedagogy, to denote the art and science of helping adults learn. He believed the reason adult education had not achieved a greater impact was that 'most teachers of adults have only known how to teach adults as if they were children'. He developed his theory in a number of papers (eg 1972, 1974) and, supported by writers such as Mezirow (1981) and Allman (1983), the ideas of a distinctive approach to the teaching of adults have gained ground.

Many suggestions have been made about the appropriate teaching methods to be used with adults. Although many of the authors of these suggestions would not accept the theory of andragogy, they do agree that the 'talk and chalk', or transmission of information by the 'expert' to the 'ignorant', is often inappropriate for adults. (Chadwick and Legge, 1984; Rogers, 1977; Stephens and Roderick, 1971; Brookfield, 1986). Many of us would argue that these didactic teaching methods are rather inappropriate for children too!

The focus of the research, however, is not upon the validity of the theory of andragogy. Rather, it is an attempt to explore, in a limited way, through a small number of case-studies the following areas:

- providers' definitions of adult students and the influence of adult students on teaching methods.
- the differences between younger and adult students in terms of study habits, learning methods and motivation among others.
- the advantages and disadvantages of a mixture of younger and older students in the same classes.

- the problems in learning needs adults see themselves as having and the institutional responses to these.

- the effectiveness of teaching methods in general and cost-effectiveness in particular.

We did not envisage that each case-study would provide information on all these areas. Providers who catered only for adults, for instance, might have little to say about mixed classes of younger and older students. Rather, we anticipated that we would comment on all these areas as a result of all the case-studies. This pair of case-studies focuses particularly on the effectiveness of teaching methods and through this touches on the learning need for acquiring confidence and skills applicable to real-life experience. We also discovered a little about the tutors' and course co-ordinators' problems in providing evening class tuition.

THE COURSES

'O' Grade English was included as an area of study in the original research specification. Within this area we chose to focus on an Adult Education Centre and a Community School. There were three main reasons for this choice. Firstly, through choosing two different providers the possibility of contrasting methods was introduced. Secondly, the evening class in the Community School provided a clear example of adults and sixteen year-old day-students working together. Finally, evening classes were chosen rather than day classes because it was felt that the evening classes would include a wider variety of students.

Brief details of the courses are given below. Fuller information about the observed sessions are provided in the appendices.

1) Course A (An Adult Education Centre)

This 'O' Grade English course was held in an inner city Adult Education Centre which was organised by two community workers and which offered a variety of different subjects and a range of English provision. The running of the course originated from an adult education project set up in 1976 when the area had been identified as being disadvantaged and so requiring priority treatment. The present two co-ordinators observed that, initially the workers appointed for this thought that there would be a need for adult literacy schemes, but the local people were soon asking for training to become basic education voluntary tutors or for the provision of 'O' Grade courses. Therefore 'O' Grade English was provided by offering a night class at the Centre. Three and a half years ago, when the present community workers arrived, the demand for this had so increased that two such classes, an afternoon one as well as an evening one were set up. These courses start on the first Tuesday in September each year which means the students have about thirty weeks in which to prepare for the examination. Students can, if they wish, enrol for this course throughout the year, though if they do not do so before the middle of October, they miss the chance to fill in the form which enables them to sit the examination at the end of the course.

The evening class starts at 7.00pm and finishes at 9.30pm once a week. There are no fees for students attending this course; some of the materials, for example exercise books, are provided free. The course was held in the Adult Education Centre which is based in some huts and in part of an adjacent secondary school. Most evenings the course was held in a classroom in the latter. The furniture in this classroom was arranged to facilitate group work.

The number of students on the roll for this course was, by October 11, twenty-eight, twenty-one women and seven men. The majority came from the surrounding area and were in full-time lowly paid employment. Their ages ranged from the early twenties to the mid-fifties; most of the students were under the age of thirty.

This was the tutor's second year of teaching this course at the Centre. She also had a part-time post as an English teacher at a Further Education College. Prior to this, she taught English in a secondary school. The tutor who took the course for one evening during the time of our research, because of the absence of the regular tutor, had a full-time post at the same College of Further Education. The two co-ordinators were trained as community workers.

2) Course B (A Community School)

The institution was designated as a Community School. It provided for a wide range of community activities: leisure activities, 'open door' policy for adults for both day and evening classes, certificate and non-certificate classes. There were 'O' Grade evening classes (for both school students and adults) in accounts, arithmetic, art, biology, chemistry, geography, English and modern studies. The school was opened ten years ago and an English 'O Grade evening class has been running for the past nine years. Each weekly session lasted from 7.00pm until 9.00pm. Present fees are £28.00 inclusive of exam fees. It is free if unemployed or on YTS scheme. There are extensive community facilities, including a cafeteria and meeting area which was often used by the students. The evening class itself took place in a classroom environment with the desks arranged in rows.

At the time of observation there were nine adults on the course, two men and seven women. There were a further ten school pupils. The total number of adults and pupils varied between sessions, sixteen being an average number. Some adults had dropped-out and some had joined as late as two months into the first term of the year's course. However, the majority of adults had attended the whole year. The age range of the adult students was wide, ranging from two who had just left school through to the early fifties. Four were unemployed.

The tutor had been employed as Head of the English Department since the school opened. He had always led the evening classes. When first taking up the post he had signed the 'alternative contract' which states that he is willing to take part in adult evening tuition. The course co-ordinator was the Assistant Head responsible for Community Affairs and Public Relations.

These then, were the courses which, taken together, form the basis of this study. Both were evening classes, both were a year in length and both sought to prepare students for an 'O' Grade exam. The exam itself requires answering questions on the interpretation of written passages, the production of an essay and the study of set works consisting of books, plays and poetry. 50% of marks allocated are for the interpretation, 30% for the essay and 20% for the set-work answers.

RESEARCH METHODS AND SAMPLE

There were four main research methods used: semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation of teaching, perusal of course documents, and the informal collection of information by talking to students and tutors at coffee breaks and both before and after the teaching period. The semi-structured interviews were designed to encourage discussion on the effectiveness of methods in the perception of the participants. The non-participant observation involved noting the tutors' activities and student activities and any changes in these activities. There were two main purposes to the observation, firstly to gather data on classroom activities and, secondly, to help inform interviews. We felt that we would have a better understanding of comments on teaching methods if we had seen them being used.

Owing to the demands of the timetable of our total project and to difficulty in finding an 'O' Grade English course which involved both adults and younger students, it was not possible to observe the two classes at the same stage of development. Course A was therefore observed at the beginning of the academic year, whilst Course B was observed towards the end. The difference in the timing of the observations has made data analysis difficult. In essence we content analysed the data deriving categories from our research questions and progressively identifying new categories from the data. We made strenuous attempts through inter-coder reliability checks to ensure that we were interpreting the data according to the same rules.

We provide below a summary of the classes observed and the interview sample. In selecting particular students to interview we tried to obtain a contrasting sample. In each course, therefore, we aimed for a mixture of men and women respondents, a mixture of employed and unemployed and respondents of different ages. Where possible the interviews were tape-recorded, but in some cases the interviewees asked for the machine not to be used. In these instances we relied on detailed notes. The average time of the interviews was forty-five minutes.

<u>Course A</u>

(a) Observation - Non-participant.

Six evening sessions from the beginning of the course (September/October 1988). Five of these with the same tutor.

(b) Interviews - 1 interview with each course co-ordinator (2).
1 interview with each course tutor (2).
10 interviews with students.

Course B

(a) Observation - Non-participant
Four evening sessions at the end of the year's work (March/April 1989). Also, one extra 'revision' session.

(b) Interviews - 2 interviews with the course co-ordinator.
2 interviews with the course tutor.
8 interviews with adult students.
1 group interview with three school pupils.

CLAIMS ABOUT THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

What can we claim on the basis of the data collected? Clearly these courses do not provide a statistical basis for generalising to teaching and learning in all 'O' Grade English courses. The sample was not selected on that criterion. Further, these case-studies do not provide us with detailed information about the thoughts and feelings of students and teachers. Also, we have very little to say about the culture in which concerns about teaching methods are embedded. What we can claim is that we found patterns of response about the perceived effectiveness of a range of teaching methods. We hope that in describing these perceptions, those engaged in adult education will consider whether they strike chords with their own experience. Are the comments made by the adult students and their tutors recognisable? If so, are there possibilities for extending and developing or changing the teaching methods used? In other words, we hope this study will provoke discussions and reflection on the teaching methods being used, their rationale and effectiveness.

TEACHING METHODS AND PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR EFFECTIVENESS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter concentrates on: the aims of both tutors and students; the teaching methods used in the courses and the reasons tutors gave for employing these methods; and on how effective the methods were in the opinion of the participants. In the narrowest sense, effectiveness might be judged solely on pass rates for the exam. However, it was clear from interviews, both with tutors and students, that they believed there were a greater number of aspects of effectiveness than exam success alone. Examples of these aspects would be: skills learnt in the use of language which can be transferred to everyday working life; increasing the self-confidence of the learner and stimulating powers of self-expression; and providing the learner with an interest in the subject which might extend beyond the area of the exam syllabus. Such factors indicate a broader view of effectiveness which is more difficult to analyse but, questions concerning relevance, stimulation and interest, were significant for tutor and student alike. We return to perceptions of effectiveness later in the chapter, but firstly we describe the aims and teaching methods used, together with the underlying reasons for their inclusion.

AIMS AND TEACHING METHODS

Tutor and Student Aims

On both courses the tutors stated that the main aim was to enable students to obtain an 'O' Grade pass and that they believed the majority of students would wish to use this for a variety of vocational purposes. They did feel, however, that there were a number of additional purposes, which, if not so easily identifiable, were still important. There were four major areas of concern. Firstly, they wished to help develop skills in the use of language, both spoken and written. Secondly, they wished to aid students to gain confidence in the use of the subject and to promote enjoyment in self-expression. In connection with this aim one tutor also pointed out the necessity to allow students to develop individually at their own pace. Thirdly, they were all concerned that they should attempt to foster an interest in, and appreciation of, literature. Finally, they appreciated that the course might offer a different social experience for many. This might be in terms of meeting a new set of people and exchanging ideas, or in providing an additional sense of purpose. Here, one tutor felt that offering a structured activity was particularly useful for unemployed students and this was certainly mentioned in one student interview:

> It was something to look forward to. I actually missed it during the holidays, both the classroom and the social side. You have nothing to look forward to when you are unemployed.

In all these four areas of concern the tutors were worried that such aims might be lost in the major drive towards an exam result:

> In an evening class, because of the shortage of time, I think it's hard to do everything. The pressure is really on. I think the vocational one does tend to override the others. Some people just want to pass the exam. I think the enjoyment of literature is the one that can be quashed out, gone by the board.

What the students sought from the courses appeared to match the tutor aims well. All referred to the importance of the acquisition of an 'O' Grade pass. This could be used either as a direct qualification, such as for the post of a personal secretary or for a nursing career, or to provide them with a certificate which might be used in the future, when they might be seeking promotion. Some reported that they had no use for an immediate qualification but that the exam syllabus provided them with a structured method of improving their skills. As might be expected, it was the younger adults who talked most about obtaining a qualification, although this was not always the case. For example, there was a fifty year-old student who needed the 'O' Grade pass in order to proceed with Sheriff Officer exams.

As with the tutors, the students identified many additional aims. The most important of these were seeking an increase in self-confidence and gaining a different interest through something that took them away from the house for an evening. There were also a significant number who felt that they wanted to have a second attempt with their education, believing that they were now far better motivated than when at school. Often the aims of the adult students were not clear-cut but rather a mixture and spread of ideas. The following short comments from different students give some idea of this:

> It was the tangible evidence of a certificate plus more modern methods of teaching in depth. I was in the house so much. I felt my brain was stagnating. I couldn't remember words.

> To give me confidence. I missed out on education. I think this might help me. I only had a couple of hours a day because of the war. I never managed to catch up. I'm now confident to meet people and speak to people.

> Basically I'm in quite a boring job and it's just for something to do in the evenings. Plus to better myself at the same time. I do look forward to getting out, being on my own for those few hours.

> The qualification is important in that it is a goal - something tangible. I will be bitterly disappointed if I do not get it and yet it is not vital. I am quite looking forward to the exam, although I will be nervous. It will be important to prove that I have learnt something. The time of the exam will be tinged with regret because of the ending of the course. The social side has been important.

The last quotation is interesting. It comes from a student on Course B which, it will be remembered, is the one that had been running for the full academic year. From this course, two out of the eight adults interviewed pointed out that, at the beginning, their main interest had been in

gaining a qualification but that now they were less concerned about this, being more interested in aspects of the subject for its own sake. A majority of those interviewed on this course also mentioned a significant rise in interest in the subject during the year. There may, of course, be many reasons for this, such as tutor influence or a supportive and lively group. However, what seems most important here is that, out of an amalgam of aims a more definite sense of purpose appears to have emerged by the end of the course. In this case all but one, out of the eight adult students interviewed, stated that they now wished to proceed to Higher Grade out of interest in the subject, although this had been far from clear to them at the beginning of the course:

> I would like to go on to Highers. I would like to get into the heavy English.

Needs Underlying Methods

All the tutors referred to three basic areas as a priority in responding to student needs. In summary these were:

(i) stimulating the organisation of ideas through practice;

(ii) promoting a sense of achievement and self-confidence;

(iii) providing a comfortable and well-motivated learning environment.

(i) Practice was seen as an important element, especially in relation to formulating ideas quickly into a communicable form. Skills applicable to the larger forms of writing, such as essay writing and paragraph development were seen as central. From this they would then proceed to other conventions of writing such as punctuation and spelling. A further aspect of practice was the necessity to kindle a habit of writing and reading:

> I used to start at sentence level and try and work out from that and feel that if they could get it right within the sentence, the rest would follow. I'm not so sure now whether that is true. I tend to start now more with the big unit, with the composition or at least with a paragraph and I feel if they can see how a paragraph is structured and then how a sequence of paragraphs fits into a composition or a written answer, then the punctuation will very often fall into place within that. So it's a question of organising ideas really. (Tutor Comment)

(ii) Many observations from tutors were made on the need to instil a sense of achievement and self-confidence. They attempted to promote these feelings at an early stage:

> They achieve very quickly with the essay. I give them an essay to write very early in the course. This gives me a chance to assess their basic writing ability and their imaginative qualities. This also gives them the feeling that they are actually getting somewhere.

They also referred to numerous ways in which they would attempt to maintain a supportive atmosphere throughout the course. They would be careful not to embarrass members through making weaknesses public. Sensitivity had to be employed in reading

out examples of students' work, making comments needed to be constructive and handling discussion needed tact:

> It is not so much what you do as how you do it. Using sensitivity. Trying not to rebuff people - trying to make something out of their comments.

In all of this tutors were very conscious that the exam could well destroy much of the confidence built up over the course and it was always a worry that the students would respond badly to the pressure within a given time limit, even if this was practised constantly beforehand.

(iii) Providing a comfortable and well-motivated learning environment is very closely related to the above. Tutors were keen to create an informal yet purposeful atmosphere. They aimed for a pleasurable experience and also attempted a sensitive approach towards lapses in attendances or non-completion of homework which might well be due to outside pressures of work or difficulties at home. They were also well aware that a student's early experience of education may not have been a very happy one:

> There is a good deal of uncertainty in coming into a school again. Memories of school, they think it is going to be like it again. The first two weeks are a bit tense. They are not going to learn unless they feel comfortable and motivated.

Self-motivation amongst adults was felt to be higher than that of school children. After all, they had made a conscious effort to attend. The tutors' concern was to maintain this motivation, especially in the context of an exam syllabus. This might be achieved through encouraging social activities, such as theatre trips, or by making it clear that they appreciated the contributions of students and were readily available to discuss individual problems. Here tutors pointed out that an important aspect of motivation was the fact that they found adults a pleasure to teach. Treating the students as equals with important contributions to make, gave rise to stimulating feedback from the group.

The Teaching Methods

Through observing two courses and three tutors at work, a number of different teaching methods were encountered. As the two courses were at different stages of development, there was, naturally, a different emphasis; Course A concentrated on introductory work whilst Course B included preparation for the exam. Further, no two tutors could be expected to operate in exactly the same manner. However, although there might be different emphasis, most methods were common to all three tutors. The major forms of tuition were: tutor-centred class work; whole-class discussion; group work; and assessment of individual written work.

Although all tutors did employ a tutor-centred approach at certain times, two felt that this was more important than the third. These two tutors pointed out that, in their view, adults were

more comfortable with what might be termed a more traditional approach, as it was a style adults were used to from their experience of school. These are their comments:

> Its rather like a lecture - I talk and then ask for responses. It's very much teacher dominated. I don't think that the method is wrong or any worse than anything else. It depends on whether it is appropriate. It depends on whether the adults feel comfortable with the approach. I think they would feel more uncomfortable with methods we use with junior classes.

> I also do a fair amount of talking from the front for various reasons. One is, I think that classes quite enjoy it. I think that's partly what they come for, they come to be taught and I think it's quite reassuring to have someone who will stand up there and say this is what the book is about, these are the main themes, this is what you should understand. I think people quite like that.

The third tutor was less convinced of the value of this approach feeling that, although it was necessary at times, in order to get some major points across, it was of far less value for the less confident who might 'nod sagely but haven't a clue what you are saying'. This tutor was also less convinced of the value of class discussion, again because she was concerned that the less confident would find it difficult to contribute. All tutors agreed, however, that there were occasions when students needed to work quietly on their own at written answers. This relates clearly to the points mentioned earlier, concerning the necessity for adults to practise the organisation of ideas within given time limits. During such times the tutors attempted to talk to most students individually.

The tutor who was less convinced of the value of tutor-centred learning introduced more group work sessions with the students. She felt that they were more likely to relax in smaller groups and that this approach was therefore of greater value to the development of self-confidence. She also maintained that it was easier to promote student exchange of diverse experiences in small groups and that it was simpler to pick up individual difficulties if the class was split:

> To me (group work) is the sharing of ideas. I, as a teacher, am only one person with ideas. What I love about group work is that you get angles, texts even, that you haven't even thought about, and that's great. It's really about sharing ideas, especially in literature.

However, another tutor felt that too much group work might be stressful for adults who were looking for a certain amount of lead from the tutor, especially at the beginning of the course. Further, it was suggested that this method was more time-consuming and that, relating to one of the central needs of sense of achievement which included preparation for the exam, there was only a certain amount of time available before students might begin to feel anxious.

Although tutors did tend to concentrate on one approach or the other, there was obviously no clear answer for them and they were willing to introduce a variety of methods. Perhaps what is most important is that they related the reasons for the employment of any one approach back to what they saw as the fundamental needs stated earlier. These were: need for practice; need to promote a sense of achievement and self-confidence; and need to provide a comfortable and well

motivated learning environment. It would seem that as long as the tutor could justify an approach in one or other of these terms then they were happy to employ it with the students.

There was a greater degree of agreement on other aspects of tuition. All tutors felt that the asking of students to produce homework was problematical, but they felt the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. The major advantage was seen as one of giving the students a chance to complete a piece of work in isolation. This was felt to be particularly valuable in promoting a sense of achievement. On the other hand, conditions at home might militate against the value of the exercise. The approach employed was to encourage the completion of homework but not to insist on this. Handouts containing major points on model answers were often given to students. These were considered valuable for revision, although one tutor was worried about the aspect of spoon-feeding. Both courses involved trips to the theatre. On two occasions these were a production of set works, but, in the third case, the play was not part of the syllabus. All tutors valued these trips. They felt that it was not only important for aiding understanding of set works, but also for promoting motivation through encouraging social cohesion.

One final area of agreement amongst the tutors was that they considered adults were more adept than younger students at exchanging ideas and both listening to, and learning from, each other. They also pointed out that adults possess a wider range of experience than children and, wherever possible, they would attempt to encourage talking and writing from a personal point of view:

> Methods are slightly different obviously, for example, composition work: adults always have a greater advantage because of their experience of life. I always say this to them. Some of the topics that they're asked to do at 'O' Grade, really it is very difficult for boys and girls of 15 and 16, they haven't got the life experience. I tell adults they have the advantage, especially now that the 'O' Grade composition titles are geared very much towards personal experience. They are at an advantage and I find this something that they can cope with.

> When you're dealing with novels, when you're dealing with characters, again this is a big advantage, they understand what you are talking about, they've met these characters. The same with poetry, you're dealing with emotions. For many children of 15 or 16 they may not have experienced any of these emotions which you are talking about.

As already mentioned, such exchanges of experience gave stimulating feedback to the tutors themselves.

So far we have concentrated on a description of aims and methods. In considering tutor aims we have attempted to show that these were often echoed by the students. Here, an important element was that the students appeared to clarify their aims as the course progressed. This was often allied to an increasing interest in the subject. The methods employed by the tutors naturally varied according to individual style, but there were no radical differences of approach. In particular, tutors attempted to explain the use of methods in terms of the perceived fundamental needs of practice, encouraging the growth of self-confidence and sense of achievement, and in

providing a comfortable learning environment. Perhaps it is worth pointing out here that the reasoning for employing certain methods was not entirely consistent. For example, the tutor who worried about the spoon-feeding of students through the use of handouts was also the person who supported a teacher-centred approach most of all. Further, two tutors felt that students were comfortable with a style of teaching which echoed their earlier schooling and yet they also pointed out that students may have had an unhappy experience during their schooldays. However, what seemed most important to tutors was that through practice they had arrived at a set of procedures which, given the confines of an exam syllabus, appeared to work for them. We now proceed to consider student perceptions of those methods.

PERCEPTIONS OF EFFECTIVENESS

We now turn to the question of how effective the teaching methods were. As indicated earlier, we have no independent measures on the effectiveness of various teaching methods. We are reporting the students' and the tutors' perceptions of effectiveness. We also indicated earlier that we had no preconceived notion of what effectiveness might mean. It could range from learning the content, to harder-to-measure effects, such as increased self-confidence or gaining a sense of purpose in life. Our data from the students and tutors suggest four main dimensions of effectiveness. These are preparation for the exam, the acquisition of skills, expanding capabilities and developing self-confidence, and the social experience.

Preparation for the Exam

Both during the periods of observation and in interview the tutors demonstrated that they were constantly aware of the need to prepare students adequately for the exam. One of the important questions for them was how much to concentrate on this to the exclusion of what might be seen as more enjoyable activities. As can be seen from their original aims, they felt that the course should also offer the chance for the development of self-expansion and interest in literature. However, not all aspects of exam preparation were seen as running counter productive to the wider aims and it was maintained that a pass at 'O' Grade could do much for a student's self-esteem. Like the tutors, few students saw a qualification as the only reason for attending the course although they felt that it did provide them with a clear-cut goal, thus giving them a sense of purpose and a structure to the learning activity. They too recognised that a pass at 'O' Grade would help their self-confidence. The following comments are typical:

> The exams have been an extra incentive, but I would have worked anyway.
>
> Hopefully, when the children go to school, if I've got some qualification behind me, I'll have some confidence in myself.

As has been pointed out already, in the course that was observed at the end of the year (Course B), there appeared to be a shift towards more general interest in the subject, which suggests that, although there was tutor concern over time spent on exam work, there was still an opportunity for personal development:

> At the beginning, I did this course for the qualification and to get out. This seems less important now.

Our observations and interviews took place before the exam had been taken and therefore we have no means of assessing student reaction to the event. However, the combined results produced a pass rate of 60%. Given the variety of academic background of the students, including past failures at 'O' Grade, it would seem that such a level of success is a mark of the tutors' expertise and the students' motivation. It is one clear piece of data which shows the effectiveness of the courses.

Acquisition of Skills

From student comments it appears that they regarded the acquisition of skills as being divided into two areas. These areas would be, firstly, that concerned with writing facility and, secondly, that involving the ability to communicate. Naturally there is some overlap between the two, but we take each in turn below.

(1) Writing skills - The question of teaching individuals, at all levels, how to write 'correctly' and fluently is something which has been debated for a considerable time. Teaching methods have changed over the years and, as the age range of the students on the courses observed spread from those who had just left school to those in their early fifties, their school experience was likely to be varied. The tutors were therefore attempting to build on a number of different backgrounds. As already stated, they maintained that the organisation of ideas through essay and paragraph work was a useful starting point. Students were concerned with a whole range of weaknesses, often more than one. The chief of these were spelling, punctuation, the organisation of essays and summaries, and the ability to supply written interpretations of passages of prose and poetry. They recognised that they needed help from the tutor as individuals, but identified that the chief way of improvement for them was through the development of the ability to concentrate, through practice:

> It's hard because you're out of the way of concentrating, like with the interpretation and things. I think they're easy once you get into them but it's getting your mind back into the way of thinking, disciplining yourself to sit down and do it.

All tutors provided an opportunity for students to practice producing written work in class and this was backed up by homework exercises. The most common method of providing such practice was through the interpretation of written passages. Apart from this providing an

opportunity to develop self-discipline, they also felt that it was useful for students to work within time limits:

> I think it's quite nice to have some silent writing and you can get a kind of atmosphere of concentration when everyone is sitting writing which you don't really get any other way. (Tutor Comment)

There was no complaint from the students concerning written work. In fact, many referred to liking the way that it provided a sense of organisation and purpose:

> I find every time you go in, she's got everything organised. You know you're going to do something - you're not sitting about - she's got it all planned. You're actually working from when you go in until you come out again. Quite enjoy that ... If you're just sitting and listening to someone, I don't think you take it in.

They also appreciated that they needed practice at producing timed answers. Further, they emphasised the fact that homework filled in the long gap between lessons, although some found this difficult to organise. There were also comments from the students that they appreciated being given handouts on topics ranging from notes on paragraphing to summaries of novels. They could read these over carefully at home. With regard to the marking and appreciation of written work both courses attempted peer assessment as well as tutor-marked work. Some students on Course A disliked this whilst those on Course B were pleased to show their work to others and to hear their comments. Our observation of Course B took place towards the end of the academic year and therefore this may show that students need time to get to know each other, before feeling relaxed about showing their efforts to others.

Running through many of the students comments there appeared to be a strong emphasis on the perceived need for practice in a variety of areas and also a recognition that they required to be given sufficient time to recall and consider topics raised in class. The members seemed well-motivated towards doing this. Whether they would have emphasised the importance of practice, if the exam had not been a major goal is an interesting question to speculate upon. All we can say is that they did not comment upon any part of the exam syllabus as being an unnecessary hindrance in the acquisition of skills.

(2) Ability to communicate - Whilst students were concerned to improve their writing skills they were equally keen to work on their ability to communicate verbally, as well. Here they emphasised the need to discuss ideas amongst themselves. As with the tutors there was no definite support for any one technique which encouraged discussion, some liked whole-class work, whilst others preferred the more informal group discussion. It will be remembered that one tutor was less enthusiastic about tutor-led discussion with the whole group, because she felt that the less confident were at a disadvantage. In connection with this, it was noticeable that the students on Course B, who had known each other for almost a year, made little distinction between discussing in a larger or smaller group, feeling that it was all important. The students on Course A, on the other hand, tended to talk more favourably of group work.

It would seem that nerves did play a significant part at the beginning of the courses. For example, one student described how he approached the door of the class three times before entering and even then might well have not done so if he had not been spotted by the tutor. Perhaps it was for this reason that whole-class involvement appeared to be more effective with the second course, which had been running for some time:

> The first night that I went, everything was blocked out of my mind, I wasn't concentrating on what was going on because I was thinking she's going to ask me next.

Concern had been expressed by one tutor over discussion in group work being stressful and possibly lacking in direction. Student comments did not really support this view. Gaining ideas from each other was considered very important:

> In the groups we're hearing different opinions - I think that's what English is all about - opinions about something.

They did, however, wish to balance interactive work with being allowed time to work on their own:

> I like the group, it gives you an idea. Getting ideas from other people instead of sitting there stuck ... Yet sometimes I quite enjoy doing it myself when I come home.

They were also concerned that some individuals could dominate such work:

> Quite good to discuss beforehand, as long as you are left to write down what you want yourself. Because I find with groups, if there's a dominant one, if there's one that talks a lot, that's usually the idea that is put over. But you can discuss if there are two or three who discuss it quite calmly, rationally and then you write your own thing, well that's fair enough.

One perhaps more surprising aspect of student interaction was that, although students often referred to feeling nervous, especially at the beginning of the course, one class had attempted reading some of the set-work plays during an evening session and this had been well received. In fact many singled this out as one of the highlights of the course. In connection with set works it was also pointed out that visits to the theatre and the showing of films based on the books was an important advantage.

Acquiring skills of writing facility and ability to communicate were both of major concern to the students. An important element here was also the question of tutor attitude which made the learning possible. In Course B the majority of students felt that it was the tutor's manner which had been the most significant factor in aiding their learning. Further, when a different tutor took over for one evening session on Course A, the students reported that they had difficulty adjusting to the style of someone new. ('Probably if we had had her from the beginning and had been used to here way it would have been quite O.K'). The students appreciated several qualities in the tutors, the most important being an approachable nature, a supportive style and an ability to relate to the problems of individuals. The following comments from both courses are typical:

> It is how the tutor teaches the course which makes it good, rather than what he does.
>
> The main aspect of the course was that the tutor and the students all get on well together. The tutor was particularly good at calming your nerves. He valued what you had to say and his personality made the group work well.
>
> She is always very approachable. Even though you think it's a bit stupid, the question you're going to ask, and you sort of hesitate to do it, she never makes you feel as though it's a stupid question and she always answers you honestly. I like that.

In summary, although there were several points raised by the students concerning acquisition of skills, they appear to centre on three areas - the need for practice, the desire to learn from the ideas of others through some form of organised interaction and the importance of a supportive attitude from the tutor. Although there may be a danger in attempting to look for underlying causes, it would seem that many of the students' comments do arise from a desire to develop self-confidence. References to nervousness and to tutor support would appear to highlight this. We deal more directly with this aspect below.

Expanding Capabilities and Developing Self-Confidence

It has already been mentioned that tutors saw the promotion of confidence, enjoyment in self-expression and interest in literature as important aims. Students also appeared interested in the development of their attitude towards the subject. In particular, those on Course B were able to look back over the year and assess this aspect. The general feeling was summed up succinctly by one member:

> I would like to go on with Higher English. The interest has come about because of this year. The course has given me confidence.

Confidence appears to be a central concern, not only in the acquisition of skills, but also in the rise of interest. Much of the increase in confidence was attributed to tutor stimulation and support. Also, as has been already stated, students on both courses were looking towards the possibility of proceeding to Higher English and, by the end of the year, seven out of eight adults on Course B were wishing to carry on. This gives rise to speculation as to the value for the students in attending a class which offered the opportunity for future development. It might also be important that students had the space of a year in which to assess their personal commitment in a subject which encourages reflection. In contrast, half of the students on Course B were also attending an arithmetic class, although this was similar in length they all reported that they found this more difficult and less stimulating, the major reason being that there was insufficient time to consider new concepts:

> With arithmetic you have to grasp a subject quickly for they are on to a different subject next time you go.

The English class allowed them more time to reflect on topics: it also gave them a sense of challenge:

> My wife went to computer lessons. After a while she found it levelled out, it stopped going forward. This course has always been going forward, it has been gathering in depth all the time.

It would seem of value to the students that the course offered the possibility of self-exploration, the realisation of capabilities and the confidence to express new found skills. Many of their comments involved these aspects:

> Getting out of the house and getting up there. It was interesting instead of just watching television. I now find that I am quite good at writing poems. There are a lot of things you find out about yourself. I am now feeling a lot more confident. I went on an Employment Training course for a while, that was not a very good experience. On this course you were meeting people, talking about different things, the books, plays, things of interest.

> I found the essay work the most enjoyable. I like writing. I had not done it before but now I enjoy thinking of different ways of putting things and using words to good effect.

> I want to go on and do Higher English. I think I will try for two subjects next year. I want to keep on doing it. I've discovered something I didn't think that I could do.

> I found the course most useful in getting my brain moving before stagnating.

The realisation of such capabilities and the development of self-confidence appeared to provide a strong motivating force:

> I want the education. I want to learn.

> Response to a course such as this is a mixture. Enthusiasm comes both from within and from the tutor.

The Social Experience and Awareness Raising

Group support and the exchange of ideas between members was seen as a valuable aid to their learning by the students. To this, they added that they had come to appreciate that it was necessary to listen to each other critically and they also found it important to be able to talk about their own experience:

> The group feeling was strong and we all got on well with each other. We got many ideas from each other. We are all what you would call working class and the fact that many of us were unemployed helped to bring the group together. Stan (one of the course members) being in the class helped a lot, his work was something to look up to and to work towards. We used to meet beforehand in the canteen and discuss our work with each other. We even read each other's work and this helped a lot.

> I'm getting satisfaction, doing something for myself and meeting people. It is so important getting into contact with people, talking about how they get on in their work and about the writing they have done.

Comments such as those above illustrate that many students valued the social aspect of the course and that they related this to their learning. As can be seen from the quotation that begins this section, the adults in Course B arranged to meet each other before the evening's session, as well as during the coffee-break. This they found important and it would appear to echo one of the aims of all the tutors which was that the course should allow for a new social experience for many. A typical way in which the tutors sought to encourage 'social cohesion' would be the theatre trips, which they considered 'good for morale'. As one tutor pointed out :

> You must have a good theatre trip before Christmas and you must have a party.

The value of the theatre trip in terms of understanding the set works has already been referred to, but many students saw it as more than this:

> The social side was important here and it was a new experience, seeing a play performed. I have always been interested in the arts and reading. This joined so many different things together for me.

It would also appear that the influence of the course extended into other aspects of the lives of the members. Many appreciated that it had begun to enrich outside activities. There were references here to influence on private reading:

> Before I read rubbish, now I can discriminate. Now I'm looking into the book, reading it critically.

There were also comments on how they were now more conscious of their writing style and how the experience of the course had influenced their attitudes at work:

> Now, when writing letters, I try to think of the interesting work.

> Going to night school has helped with my job. I am often working with young adults, therefore it has been useful to see their point of view. Many of them have reading and writing problems like myself and therefore I can understand their problems.

A further dimension of effectiveness in this area was the way in which students noted that family interest had been aroused through their activities. Some noted that partners had also become interested in the subject Others referred to the fascination aroused in their younger children. On this second point, it was also clear that the course had increased the involvement of a family with education in general. This sometimes led to concern over the amount of effort that teenagers might be putting into their school work. The high level of the parent's motivation sometimes highlighted this. The following comments illustrate these latter points:

> Going to the theatre was useful. My husband came the second time. Now we might go there together rather than just down the pub.

> I don't mind sharing my experience with others. People outside the course often read my work. They may be people who are interested but have never followed a course up.

My twelve year old son is interested because he is in the first year at the school and is therefore interested in how I find the teachers. He also talks about how I end the essays.

My younger son thinks it is really great that I am doing the course, the older one is not too sure, maybe he is worried in case I do better than him.

I look at my sons, they do no revision and now they ask me for help!

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have attempted to describe the basic aim of the tutors and the students. We then proceeded to describe the methods employed in order to put the aims of the tutors into practice. Finally, we dealt with student perceptions on the effectiveness of the methods. There appeared to be much in common between the aims of the tutors and the students and these were wider than the major vocational aim of the exam pass. With regard to methods, the students appeared most receptive to those which promoted self-confidence in handling written and spoken communication. They therefore stressed the importance of practice, a supportive tutor attitude and being allowed to exchange ideas with others. There are, of course, influences more especially identified by co-ordinators and tutors which, although not always directly involving what goes on in the classroom, seem to have an important effect on the course. These are dealt with in the following chapter.

FACTORS SEEN AS AFFECTING TEACHING

In Chapter 2 we described teaching methods and perceptions of their effectiveness. In the main, student comments were favourable and they appeared to have benefited in many ways. In particular, they spoke of advances in the acquisition of skills, a development of self-confidence in handling both written and spoken communication, a growing interest in the subject and a stimulating social experience. Naturally, the teaching methods do not exist in complete isolation and in this chapter we identify four major areas which were referred to during interviews and which seem to have an important bearing on activities. These are:

- attracting students and guidance;
- the choice of staff and their motivation;
- a mixture of school pupils and adults;
- resources.

Attracting students and guidance

Both courses began as a response to adult demand. In the case of the Course A it had originally been intended to offer adult literacy schemes only, but it soon became apparent that many students were seeking some form of certificated qualification. An 'O' Grade English course was therefore introduced. This demand for certification steadily increased, so that, four years ago, the number of classes had expanded from the first evening class to extra courses in the afternoon. The origin of Course B was similar. Here, ten years ago, at the time of the opening of the Community School, more general courses had been offered, such as theatre workshops, poetry writing and an English Club for Juniors. Once again, adult demand was for a formal qualification and 'O' Grade English supplemented these others, after a short space of time.

As well as attempting to respond to demands, co-ordinators were concerned with identifying the best method for attracting adults. In this, they basically sought a balance between formal advertising and face to face contact. In each case leaflets were distributed in public institutions such as libraries, information centres and primary schools. These would be supplemented by advertising in the local paper and, in the case of the Community School, the local College of Further Education. More direct contact would then be attempted nearer the time of the course, either through open days, mounting displays or, in the case of Course A, organising a publicity drive in the local shopping centre. The co-ordinator at the Community School maintained that, although advertising was useful, by far the best method of attracting students was by 'word of mouth'. He therefore believed that the image of the institution was very important and that adults were most likely to be attracted to a centre which appeared to be run efficiently. He also attempted to operate a system whereby adults were first attracted to the Community School through taking part in leisure activities organised as one-day events. He would then hope to attract some to

semi-formal activities, such as short interest courses, and then, finally, encourage people to take up more formal education. He also pointed out that he believed that public perception of adult education would change only very gradually:

> There are still pockets of perception which do not see this or any secondary school as a community resource. What is needed is a generational change, the present generation of school pupils need to experience the openness of the institution. The development and appreciation of adult education depends on the younger students who are going through the system now.

Students often gave more than one reason for choosing these particular institutions. Of those interviewed on Course B, the most common reason was that the centre was geographically convenient (two-thirds of students). A third reported that they had seen the adverts. A further third stated that they had attended some previous course, whilst 'word of mouth' reports were mentioned by a quarter of the interviewees as a reason for their choice. As geographical location is something outside of the course organiser's control, it would seem that experience of the centre, either direct or through 'word of mouth' would appear to be the most important factor in choice, with advertising also playing a significant part. Thus, the co-ordinator's view (Course B) that the image of the centre was important, would seem to be valid, if we judge on our small sample. However, on the second course, when the organiser referred to a system of attracting adults through leisure activities, it was significant that no students had arrived through this channel. They appeared to have made up their minds that they wanted an 'O' Grade English course before contacting the school.

Put in straightforward terms, most students reported that they turned up at the first session without having first discussed what the course entailed. This apparent confidence in a centre's ability to provide for them could lead to two problems. Firstly, the students might volunteer for a course which was not suited to them, as happened on Course A with two students who were not aware of the amount of study involved. Secondly, the tutors might be faced with a considerable early drop-out rate, especially during the first term. However, the difficulty with pre-course guidance was highlighted by one tutor who stated that students lacked confidence to discuss their own abilities and therefore it was difficult to help them at the beginning of a course. This having been said, few students reported feeling that they had chosen the wrong course and numbers had held up well in the classes at the time of observation.

Both institutions did provide pre-course guidance for all those who sought it. On Course A, there was an opportunity to attend a 'Return to Study' course before the term began. Also, flexibility between different courses was offered. Students could move between different 'O' Grade and 'Brush up English' courses, or they could attend both. Here, the tutors felt that it was necessary to make things clear to the students at the start:

> At the beginning there is a period when we always say to people. 'See how you get on. If it is not the right level for you, either too easy or too hard, try and let us know without just leaving and we'll try and fit you into something else.'

The co-ordinator of the Community School felt that it was also important always to have someone available to answer queries:

> We have a person who is on duty as a Duty Officer every day and evening, all weekends and holidays. An enquiring adult will often be passed on to this Duty Officer and then possibly myself or to a guidance teacher who operates a drop-in appointment system. We try to make them feel important as individuals. It is likely that they left education in the first place because they felt that schools did not want them. We must therefore make them feel important. 'Empowering the Enquirer' - that's the theory.

It would appear that organisers of both courses were concerned to provide sufficient opportunities for guidance and were aware of certain weaknesses. In general there seemed to be more facilities provided before the courses then during the year, although the tutor was no doubt a significant figure during the latter. In both courses observed the drop-out rate was not high at the time of observation and lack of guidance was not mentioned as a problem by the majority of students. A concern of the co-ordinators was to provide an organised system and to make this clear to the students. It will also be remembered that during Course B the students had, in effect, formed their own support group, through meeting before the evening's session. They were proud of their own efforts here and intended to continue to meet once the course had finished. The tutor was aware of this and felt that it was of considerable value.

The choice of staff and their motivation

Much has been said already about the importance of the role of the tutor. Many students saw this influence as central to the course. Co-ordinators also emphasised the value of their role. Although they did not go as far as to suggest that adult teaching required a completely different approach than that of dealing with school pupils, they did highlight the need for certain qualities of personality. If anything, they felt that the task was more difficult than that associated with the teaching of children:

> The choice of staff to work with adults is very important. It is a very demanding task. Additional maturity is required. Staff need to be able to sell themselves rather than rely on being in a dominant role. It is not an easy option, those who think it is are the last people you need. You need someone who is dynamic, someone who will look on the job as a challenge. We really need a sociological study to tell us who are the teachers who are most suitable.
>
> (Co-ordinator, Course B)

What is meant by additional maturity? The co-ordinator elaborated this point in terms of the tutor needing to provide adults with the feeling that their presence is valued. The co-ordinator of Course A seemed to echo this comment when she spoke of it being essential that 'adults are respected as equals.' In the last quotation, reference is also made to the tutors having to rely on their own personality rather than any system which supports them in a dominant role. Again, the other course organiser emphasised this difference between adult classes and a school system. Here it is interesting that she also makes mention of 'selling' something. Perhaps in both cases the

non-compulsory nature of the course has a subtle influence over much of the thinking of the organisers. We will return to this aspect shortly:

> We sell this place here to be informal and fun and it is important that they (the tutors) make learning fun for adults, otherwise they (the students) won't stick it. Enjoyment is very important because a lot of people we deal with haven't got there the first time round. So if the system didn't work for them the first time, if we offered them exactly the same as they got at school, there is no reason to expect it to work the second time.

It is important to remember here that the courses being discussed in this report were the same as those in school, in terms of syllabus content. Also, many students were experiencing something similar to their school days, in terms of assessment through an end of year exam. Therefore, it is very much the teaching style which is being considered, rather than the content of the course.

Tutors, for their part, spoke with enthusiasm about the teaching of adults. They found the work stimulating and much of the reason for this was the very fact that they were able to treat the students as equals. Through this, the adults provided them with feedback which increased tutor interest in the subject:

> Feedback is important for my own motivation and I feel that I learn from them. This is easier to do with adults because they don't take advantage. It is not so easy with younger classes to admit that their idea is better than yours - they see it as a weakness.

Tutor motivation was considered significant by the co-ordinators, for it was felt that adults were more sensitive than school children to lack of enthusiasm. Perhaps, once again, this is linked to the fact that the students can choose whether to continue or not. The co-ordinator of Course B was also worried that staff unrest over new contractual terms in the teaching profession and an emphasis on cost-effectiveness would undermine tutor morale:

> It is grossly wrong to evaluate in terms of money against staff. At the start of our venture (ten years ago) the teachers felt valued, we were all in it together. The end result was that adults felt needed. Now, with the new contractual terms, adults no longer feel welcome, for staff morale has dropped. ... It is the good will that is essential. Adults pick up this lack of goodwill very quickly for many teachers are not good social operators.

A further source of stimulation for tutors, especially those on Course A, was in being allowed the opportunity to exchange ideas with others involved in adult education. One tutor mentioned how attending a Teaching English as a Foreign Language Course had provided her with new ideas which she attempted to incorporate in her general teaching of adults. Another stated that she would appreciate the opportunity to attend some in-service courses. The tutor of Course B argued that he would also benefit from exchanging ideas with others, but felt that there was no real substitute for learning through practice:

> There has been no in-service for myself, apart from a spell of six weeks in Further Education during my teacher training. This did help me to realise how sensitive one has to be in dealing with adults. But I think that the best in-

> service comes through practice. Maybe that is because I find adult classes interesting and a pleasant change.

It has already been suggested that the non-compulsory nature of the course made a significant, if subtle, impact on the style of teaching. So far this has been seen in terms of a positive influence. However, the non-compulsory course also means that students may be erratic in their attendance and even cease to turn up altogether. There is also the aspect that students have chosen to follow an exam course. As will be remembered, they often make this choice before the beginning of the year without necessarily discussing the effort that this will entail. They have chosen the exam as a goal, rather than the tutor choosing it for them and this influences the attitude of the tutors.

With regard to the drop-out rate this was obviously a major concern to organisers and tutors alike. Attempts were made to alleviate the problem through various aspects of guidance, but this still affected tutor motivation:

> A disconcerting aspect of the evening class is that you start with about 30 students, then, gradually, people fade away. Sometimes you get a completely new class by Christmas. This year we have had a core of adults for most of the time, this makes me feel more motivated and committed.

There is a sense of powerlessness and frustration:

> The worst thing, I find, is actually the attendance - it's very unfortunate. It's something you can't change - you must encourage students. I don't want to shout at them if they haven't been for a few weeks. I just say, 'I'm glad you're back again.'

Out of the ten students interviewed on Course A, four were experiencing difficulty attending. They explained that this was the result of matters outside the course, such as family commitments, problems with shift work, or tiredness. It is difficult to see what can be done in such circumstances: the tutors dealt with such situations sympathetically and counselling was available. We can only say that, from the data provided in the interviews, the problems associated with lack of attendance were not in reaction to the way the course was run. Tutors may have to resign themselves to the erratic nature of attendance whilst recognising that the voluntary aspect carries with it gains as well as losses.

Unfortunately, as already stated, there does appear to be another problematical aspect to the non-compulsory nature of the course. This concerns the domination of the exam syllabus. Students have chosen to aim for an 'O' Grade qualification and therefore the tutors feel bound to adhere closely to the syllabus. As they reported, this means that tutors feel that there is less room for encouraging interest in the subject than they would like. Again, this may affect the motivation of a tutor who feels constrained. However, it should be remembered that, in the courses observed, the students saw deficiencies in the more basic writing skills as something which they had to rectify themselves through conscientious practice, although they did appreciate the individual aid supplied by the tutor. It will also be remembered that students valued an increased

interest in the subject in general, very highly. The exam might be a goal to aim for, but it was not necessarily all that they required.

Perhaps one last point should be made in considering the drop-out rate and the dominant exam syllabus. Tutors maintained that both these aspects did increase the pressure upon them and lessened their interest in teaching the subject. However, if we recall the point made by one tutor that she would appreciate more in-service opportunities, we can, perhaps, point to the fact that tutors, as well as students, need their support groups in order to view problems in perspective.

A mixture of adults and school pupils

Nothing has been said so far concerning the fact that one class, that was held in the Community School, was made up of an equal number of school pupils, in addition to the adults, most of whom were re-sitting the 'O' Grade exam. The reason for this is that all the adults stated that the mixture had not greatly affected their learning. However, there were some comments on the mixture of the group and in addition we talked to some of the school pupils about their reaction to having adults in the class.

The major comment from the pupils was that they felt that the tutor was more relaxed in the company of adults and this they preferred. They also felt that the adults were more likely to contribute orally than themselves, although they did not regard this as a significant problem. The fact that the two groups had tended to keep apart was also noted and they did regret this, stating that they would have liked to have heard what the adults thought of the course.

The adult students, too, noted that the two distinct groups had tended to form from the start. Therefore, the school pupils did not often join the adults at coffee time, nor at their pre-evening class sessions. With regard to the classes themselves, half of the adults interviewed stated that they liked the different outlook of the younger students and they found their contributions interesting, although they tended to be the quieter members of the class. No-one found them a distraction, although one adult reported that she felt constrained in contributing orally on occasions, because she wanted to give the younger ones an adequate chance:

> We don't need the qualifications in order to get a job, I feel it is more important for them.

The tutor was aware that there was little contact between the two groups, but did not wish to press the issue. He tended to let people make their own decisions in forming discussion groups within the class. He did feel that the school pupils gained more than the adults through the mixture, believing that the commitment of the adults was a good example to the others. Also, he commented on his more relaxed manner with adults which had been noticed and remarked on favourably by the younger pupils:

> With adults in the group it does make me less forceful.

In this respect he observed that he did tend to pick on the school pupils more, if he felt that they were not attending. The only other aspect he referred to was that, as has already been

reported, he tended to use a more teacher-centred approach with adults and felt that school pupils might find some difficulty in adjusting to this. As already mentioned above, this aspect was not commented on by the day students. They tended to notice his difference in manner, rather than method. Perhaps in the tutor's comments there was a tendency to recognise the adults as a stronger force within the group, but, if so, we do not feel there was a marked difference from our observations.

The course co-ordinator talked about the mixture of adults and pupils in more general terms, referring to day classes as well as evening work. Firstly, he pointed out that there was no fixed policy on the proportion of adults in a group, but that the ideal number was probably around half. He did feel that it was easier to absorb adults into classes where there was more likelihood of discussion being a major part of the learning experience. Where there was a greater emphasis on acquiring new concepts, as in the Sciences, he believed that adults would need more 'acclimatisation' and there was therefore an added burden on the tutor with regard to planning. He regarded the influence of adults in groups as a mixed blessing, stating that they often stimulated a strong sense of involvement, but that they could dominate a group:

> There appear to be some good elements and some bad. For example, recently the adults in one group expressed disappointment that the day students would not be involved in an end of term dance and they felt strongly that everyone should be involved. On the other hand, adults can dominate the class on occasions. They are highly motivated and it is understandable, but some day students do complain about this.

One aspect which he believed needed development was that some adults should be encouraged to make a formal contribution to classes through leading a talk about their own experiences:

> At its best I think that the mixed group can be described as one in which there is a positive tension between highly motivated adults and students coming into the voluntary area. This positive tension needs to be used by the teacher. In the social sciences area the adults could be used to provide an input. In curriculum terms the courses could be enriched by adults. But we have never been able to do this in any long-term way.

Whether such an approach would have been beneficial to the English group is not clear. In observation it was apparent that adult students were already making such contributions naturally and informally during discussions.

Resources

Difficulties with resourcing were referred to on several occasions and many of these were interlinked. It is perhaps beyond the bounds of this study to go too deeply into some of the questions raised, but we do here refer to some areas which had a distinct influence on the courses observed. Specific aspects were the lack of the resource of time which was linked to staffing availability and the need for sufficient materials, especially books of set works.

A number of students on Course B referred to the fact that they would have liked more than one session per week, in order to keep the subject 'in the front of the mind'. We do not know whether this would have been popular with all students, but one tutor from Course A also commented on the lack of time available:

> Because of the nature of the lack of time, you've got to rush on. In a sense, probably the poorer ones loose out more than the better ones. You don't have the time to really go over a point the poorer ones are missing.

If providing extra time for students, extra staffing will obviously be needed. However, in the case of the Community School both the tutor and co-ordinator emphasised that the reverse was currently taking place. The tutor commented bluntly:

> It is a difficult question to envisage how adults will be catered for in the future. The English department has been cut by over one teacher. Next year there is a strong possibility of only one offering in the evening. It will all go into Higher Grade.

A further issue was raised by the co-ordinator when he described how seven years ago his role within the school was expanded to include responsibility for third year development. He therefore had two major responsibilities, as Head of Year and Head of Community Affairs and Public Relations. Since this time it had been difficult to devote sufficient efforts to his role in developing adult education opportunities.

With regard to the availability of set-work books to study, students, again on Course B, had found that it was sometimes difficult to obtain these from the local library and yet they could only borrow from the school for a very short time. They felt that a better system of borrowing could be developed and this might be one that included videotapes. The tutor's response was not encouraging:

> Resourcing needs to be put in the context of the whole department. Any material used is being taken away from the day classes. Day classes are seriously under-resourced. Sometimes we do not have enough books to go around a form. Evening classes are smaller and so that is OK as long as they don't need books to take home. If they do take books I need them back immediately.

Questions as to whether adults students should supply their own books are beyond this study, but what is perhaps significant is that adult education should be given adequate consideration in a larger context. It has to be able to play its part in the face of other, possibly conflicting, interests. We leave the last comment on this issue to the co-ordinator of Course B:

> With the changing face of education, adults remain a small but important part. There are a range of potential clients who need courses. If our staffing is reduced to daytime student-teacher ratios on falling rolls then we cannot maintain continuity of provision. To develop programmes we need more publicity through word of mouth (ie by running successful courses) and we need to regard courses as more than one year investments. We may not get the numbers we need in the first year but we can raise expectations for the following year. But this is hardly possible if we are only allowed to run courses where numbers are kept up to a high minimum to be viable. We need

initially to concentrate on the leisure side in order to get them in, but this depends on the availability of staff to support a timetable. These are some of the interlocking issues, but staffing resources is crucial.

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have described the way in which a range of factors impinge on teaching effectiveness. Underlying the questions of guidance and staff motivation appeared to be the non-compulsory nature of the course. This can result in the students showing a strong sense of purpose, but it can also lead to pressure being placed on the tutors. In order to counteract such pressure, staff may need their own support system in the form of exchange of experiences through some form of in-service meetings. Reactions to the mixing of adults and school pupils were mostly favourable although this was not considered a major issue, either by tutors or students. On the other hand the lack of resources of staffing were causing much concern. In the concluding chapter we try to draw together the key points from this and the previous chapter and attempt to highlight their implications for teaching.

CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, we consider what our research involving the two English 'O' Grade courses has to tell us about adult education in general and teaching methods in particular. We approach this task by adopting two devices. Firstly, we provide summary answers to the various aspects of the research which we have outlined in Chapter 1. Secondly, we provide tables in which we have attempted to encapsulate the central elements of our findings on teaching methods in the area of the two courses observed.

MAIN FINDINGS

- providers definitions of adult students and the influence of adult students on teaching methods.

There was no special attempt at defining an adult student. On the courses observed there were students who had just left school through to those in their early fifties. All were looked upon as adults. Influences on teaching methods would appear to centre on the perception of tutors that the students needed to gain self-confidence and sought a stimulating and worthwhile experience. Tutors, therefore, attempted to encourage the organisation of ideas through constant practice, to promote a sense of achievement, and to provide a supportive learning environment. A variety of methods were used to accomplish these ends. One tutor favoured group work, believing that this aided the development of self-confidence, another used a more traditional tutor-centred approach because he felt that adults were more used to this style and therefore felt secure. Students responded to both approaches. What seemed important to them was that the tutors made themselves readily available to provide individual support and encouragement.

- the differences between younger and adult students in terms of study habits, learning methods and motivation among others.

Outside factors appear to have an important bearing on adult learning and motivation. Study habits can be affected by pressures of work in general and shift-work demands in particular. Family commitments may also be a significant factor. Thus adults may refer to feeling tired in the evening, they may be unable to complete homework or attendance may be sporadic. On the other hand, attitudes to learning are often accompanied by a strong sense of commitment and a desire to share the learning experience with others. It is also noticeable that they often use their learning as a means of self-discovery and that they may interpret curriculum content to suit a variety of purposes. In this instance this variety of purpose would include applying their learning to their work, finding self-expression in writing poetry, learning to discriminate in their reading or involving the family in a new venture.

- the advantages and disadvantages of a mixture of younger and older students in the same classes.

One of the courses observed was made up of an equal number of sixteen year-old school pupils and adults. This mixture was not considered a major cause of concern by the participants, but reactions were generally favourable. The adults appreciated the different outlook of the younger students and found their contributions interesting. The younger students reported that they felt that the presence of adults led to the tutor employing a more relaxed approach than in a daytime class.

The tutor maintained that the mixture was of most value to the school pupils in that they gained from the example of committed adults. It was the belief of the co-ordinator that the presence of adults in a Community School could be used to greater effect by encouraging them to provide a formal contribution.

- the problems in learning needs adults see themselves as having and the institutional responses to these.

Many adults talked of a lack of self-confidence in their ability to learn, whilst some had difficulty in adjusting to a learning environment, finding it hard to concentrate at first. Tutors responded to these problems by providing as many opportunities as possible to practise skills and by attempting to provide individual support. They also aimed to promote an encouraging atmosphere. The institutions saw the tutor's supportive role as central and therefore placed emphasis on making the correct choice of teachers to work with adults. Further problems arose through erratic attendance often caused by outside commitments, and, in some cases, adults felt that they needed extra tuition in basic skills once the course had begun. Institutions responded by operating a guidance system both before and during the course and in attempting to be as flexible as possible in offering students alternative choices for learning. Co-ordinators were not convinced that they had achieved success with such guidance, especially during the courses. They were concerned about the drop-out rate on adult courses in general and one suggested that they needed to evaluate why students ceased attending.

- adult students' perceptions of providers in terms of attitudes towards mature students and in terms of the range of teaching methods used.

Most students chose the courses because of their geographical convenience. Some had heard of the classes through word of mouth but they did not mention that the providers' attitudes towards mature students had been a significant reason for their choice. However, there were very favourable comments concerning the efforts of the individual tutors rather than the institutions. These comments mostly centred on the fact that they were impressed with the way tutors treated them as equals and were always ready to support and to deal with individual difficulties. They also pointed out that tutors played a significant role in raising their interest in the subject. Attitudes of tutors appeared to be more important than use of any one particular method.

- the effectiveness of teaching methods in general and cost-effectiveness in particular.

We have identified four dimensions of effectiveness as perceived by the students. These were effectiveness as preparation for an exam, as aiding with the acquisition of communication skills, as expanding their capabilities and developing their self-confidence, and as providing a worthwhile experience and raising their awareness of the value of the subject. It was significant that a number of Course B students who had attended the course for a year reported that their interest and enjoyment in the subject had grown, whilst the goal of the exam had either remained constant or even diminished in importance.

There were no fees on Course A. On Course B no student complained of lack of value for money. There were concerns over lack of resources in the Community School from the tutor and co-ordinator and these have been reported in Chapter 3.

Our overall impression, drawn from interview and observation, was that the students responded readily to a stimulating and supportive learning environment. Through this they were gradually overcoming their lack of confidence and beginning to look to the subject as a source of interest and one that offered an opportunity for self-expression. They gained much from tutor support and also from the exchange of ideas and experience with others within the group. Further, whilst the exam may not have been the most important goal for everyone, it did provide both tutors and students with a structure and a sense of purpose. Serious problems for students were mostly located outside of the classroom. Problems for the tutors appeared to centre around the voluntary nature of the course. For example, the students had chosen an exam course and therefore tutors tended to emphasise its importance, although they were not convinced of its value in creating interest in the subject. Also, because attendance might be erratic tutors sometimes found it difficult to maintain their motivation. It is possible that tutors over-emphasised the exam element but here we can only speculate, as we did not observe a non-exam group. What was obvious was that tutors gained much stimulation from a responsive group of adults and that the success of the courses depended, in essence, on a sensitive and respectful exchange between equals.

SUMMARY OF VIEWS ON EFFECTIVE TEACHING METHODS

In the three boxes on the following pages we attempt to encapsulate the central elements of our findings on teaching methods. The first two cover the perceptions of both students and tutors and are subdivided into the areas of effectiveness dealt with in Chapter 2. We hope that these tables will generate questions in themselves. However, we have also included a further box designed to stimulate discussion on some issues when planning courses.

BOX 1: ACHIEVEMENT

WHAT DID STUDENTS LOOK FOR?	HOW WAS THIS ACHIEVED? (The views of tutors and students)
Preparation for the Exam	
A clear goal.	Relevance to the exam syllabus. A sense of structure in learning. Cultivating the habit of concentration.
A reduction of exam anxieties.	Timed practice of exam questions. Adequate revision planned.
Acquisition of Skills	
Writing skills.	Constant practice. Clear understanding of basic grammatical rules. Some time devoted to formal writing sessions.
Oral skills.	Allowing for discussion in group or class. Giving a sense of value to all contributions. Avoiding the influence of dominant members.
Expanding Capabilities	
Increase of self-confidence.	Students practise clear organisation of ideas. The tutor encourages and supports. The tutor values the students as equals.
Gaining a new interest.	Encouraging a sense of achievement. Increasing the 'depth' as the course proceeds. Looking beyond the course to further development.
Recognising potential.	Promoting confidence. Promoting enjoyment in self-expression. Allowing time for sufficient reflection.
The Social Experience	
Contact with others.	Tutor support for social activities which develop. Organising study trips.
Learning from others.	Provision for exchange of ideas in the classroom. Encouraging students to exchange thoughts on how they handle their work load.

BOX 2: FACTORS AFFECTING ACHIEVEMENT

THE FACTORS	THE CONSEQUENCES (The views of tutors and students)
Preparation for the Exam	
The need for clarity of advice.	Student ability matched to course content. Student awareness of capabilities.
Need for confidence in the institution.	Students appreciate supportive atmosphere. Students appreciate flexibility in choice of courses.
Acquisition of Skills	
Adverse influence of outside commitments.	Interest in course subsides. Students may drop-out from the course.
Need for guidance during the course.	'Safety net' in place if student attendance is poor.
Adverse earlier learning experiences.	Sense of failure and lack of confidence.
Expanding Capabilities	
Domination of the exam.	Insufficient time for tutors to encourage interest in the subject.
Tutor not reliant on teacher dominated learning.	Students feel valued as equals.
Sense of purpose.	Students begin to look beyond the course to a further interest in the subject.
The Social Experience	
Relevance of learning to social development.	Learning used in the work situation. Increased confidence in self-expression. Learning has an influence in the home.
Mixture of school pupils and adults.	Increases variety. Increases school pupils' sense of commitment. School pupils appreciate the tutor's relaxed style.
The non-compulsory course.	Tutors feel under pressure to keep up numbers.

BOX 3: FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR THOSE PLANNING COURSES

Pre-course

When students choose a course, is there sufficient aid available to help them understand the commitment which will be required of them?

Is there an opportunity for students to change to a more suitable course within the first few weeks?

When students first join a class, what provision is there for helping them to understand the culture of the institution they are attending?

Do social activities form an integral part of the planning of the course?

The Course Itself

Are there opportunities to develop the sense of responsibility and commitment of adults to the benefit of the institution?

Are adults given support in developing self-help through group activities?

How are problems over work and family commitments dealt with during the course?

What are the best ways to stimulate a positive contribution from all course members?

Are tutors given sufficient opportunity to meet and exchange views with other adult educators in order to sustain their motivation?

Course Follow-up

Are students contacted who do not complete the course and is there any method of recording their reasons for dropping out?

Do students understand how they might continue their learning in the subject and are they offered guidance in order to discuss possibilities?

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APPENDIX: COURSE A (AN ADULT EDUCATION CENTRE)

Here we present an outline of the main topics covered by the tutor and a description of the activities undertaken.

Session 1: 6 September 1988

Throughout the first half-hour of this session and subsequent sessions, new students and some previously enrolled students arrived late in ones and twos.

7.00 Introductory procedures - the tutor outlined the 'O' Grade syllabus and examination requirements; she told the students the set text was to be 'The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie', various poems and short stories.

7.05 The tutor gave the students handouts on grammatical terms and then on paragraph topics. She explained these to the students and asked them questions.

7.15 Group work in pairs or fours - the students picked out topic sentences from some paragraphs.

7.25 The students were to write a paragraph; the tutor suggested they let their neighbours see the answers.
Homework - to write a paragraph.

8.15 Tea-break in staff room for tutor and students.

8.40 Interpretation - the tutor gave the students handouts - an interpretation passage and guidelines to interpretation exercises. The students read through the extract on their own and then the tutor went over this and the questions with them.

9.05 The students wrote down the answers and the tutor took these home to correct.

Session 2: 12 September

7.00 The tutor explained the examination requirements to any new students; returned the interpretation homework and quickly went over this.

7.10 Interpretation - second part of the extract - tutor read this aloud.

7.15 The students discussed possible answers in groups. The tutor went round helping. The students began to write down answers, reading these to other students in the group.
The tutor collected in the work of those who had finished.

8.20 Break

8.40 The tutor gave the students a short story handout. She read this out and then asked the students to discuss this and the questions on it in groups.

9.15 Homework - three longer questions on the short story. The students were encouraged to discuss these before they left.

Session 3: 20 September

7.00 Tutor A ill. A replacement tutor explained that tutor A wished the students to go to a theatre performance of the set book on 4 October instead of attending the class at the Community Centre. The topic of composition work would be left for tutor A to start on her return.

7.10 The tutor gave students an interpretation exercise, which she went over with them.

7.40 Definition of metaphor and simile. The tutor and students found examples of this in the interpretation extract.

7.50 Students to write down answers on their own.

8.15 Break

8.30 The tutor gave the students a poem and explained the content to the students; sometimes she asked them a question.

9.15 Group work, topic writing about a poem. Each of the five groups was given a different element from the poem such as one of the main characters or style. The tutor drew a diagram on the blackboard with the five topics in separate boxes. She read out a list of words and the students wrote down those related to their particular topic.

Homework - interpretation was to be finished or, if already finished, the students were to hand it in.

Session 4: 28 September

7.00 Tutor A attended to administrative details in connection with the theatre outing. She collected and returned homework. She went over the main mistakes and explained she was not giving marks yet.

7.30 The tutor went over a new interpretation extract.

7.50 The students were to write the answers down on their own, completing the work by the time of the tea-break.

8.20 Break

8.50 The tutor gave the students a poem handout with questions. The students were to work in groups discussing the answers.

9.00 Some students began writing down the answers, the tutor suggested they should be talking together more about it.

Homework - to complete the questions on the poem.

Session 5: Theatre Outing 5 October

Session 6: 11 October

7.00 Homework returned and the tutor went over this.

7.25 Composition handouts - the tutor went over these.

7.50 The tutor asked the students to choose a composition title from a list and form a plan.

8.20 Break

8.40 Brief discussion about the theatre and then students continued their compositions.

9.00 The tutor wanted to introduce a new activity - questions on the set book. However, she discovered she had forgotten to bring these and so she suggested the students either read Chapter 1 of the set book or continued with their compositions.

Homework - complete compositions.

Session 7: 18 October

7.00 The tutor returned homework and then revised a poem.

She gave an interpretation exercise and collected the students' composition homework.

7.45 The students completed the interpretation on their own.

8.20 Break

8.40 Set book question sheet - the tutor went through these with the students.

9.00 The students wrote the answers down.

Homework - to complete answers.

APPENDIX: COURSE B (A COMMUNITY SCHOOL)

Here we present an outline of the main topics covered by the tutor and a description of the activities undertaken.

March 15th (Last Session of Spring Term) 1988

Major topic: Discussion concerning the last act of the play 'The Long the Short and the Tall'.

7.00 The tutor gave back some written work, talking to individual students. He then introduced a discussion on the ending of the play, recapping on what had happened before and asking students to note the change in tension. He asked questions on the significance of the action of the characters and introduced a video film which interpreted the ending of the play in a different manner from the text in front of the students.

The students read part of the last section of the play together, taking different parts. Further discussion followed.

8.15 After the coffee-break the tutor introduced a previous exam question on the effectiveness of the ending of the play. The students divided into groups of three in order to discuss the question and to produce a list of points as a basis for a written answer. The tutor circulated amongst the groups.

A general discussion followed the group work. The tutor encouraged students to make notes on the comments of others. He brought the discussion to an end by emphasising exam technique in answering set-work questions - clarity, reasoned argument, showing knowledge of the play etc. The students were asked to complete the answer for homework.

During group discussion, there was a lively exchange of ideas and the majority of students contributed.

April 5th (First Session of Summer Term)

Major topic: Choosing and planning an essay.

Analysing a poem.

7.00 The tutor talked about the different types of essay - narrative, discursive etc - pointing out that students needed to guard against mechanical writing and wooden dialogue.

Two examples from past students were read and there was a general discussion on the merits and faults of these. Throughout the discussion the tutor emphasised the need to create a lively atmosphere when writing a narrative essay. During the

discussion the students raised questions on use of dialogue, description and organisation, whilst the tutor pointed out the importance of using varied vocabulary and sentences. Essays were planned, to be completed for homework.

8.15 Analysis of 'Dulce et Decorum Est' by Wilfred Owen. The tutor introduced the poem by providing details from Wilfred Owen's life. He then read the poem and, with suggestions from the students, the title was translated.

After this, the structure and language of the poem was considered. The tutor encouraged comments from the class who responded readily. Throughout the discussion the tutor handled contributions sympathetically, moving slowly forward and encouraging students to develop their reactions. His questions tended to be short and there was almost a continual flow of reactions.

'What is he describing?'

'Gas attack - how they reacted'.

'One man dies'.

'What is the purpose of the first verse?'

'Setting the scene'.

'Slow in the first verse. Running in the second'.

'What is the state of the men?'

'The war has aged them'.

'What are the men doing? What about the imagery?'

'They've been in combat and are going back to base'.

'Bloodshed'.

'Ecstasy of fumbling panic'.

'Why is Owen doing all this?'

'Making people realise the agony'.

'So that people wouldn't build up war into a lie'.

Further poems by Hughes and McGough were read together.

April 12th (Second Session of Summer Term)

Major topics: Practice of interpretation.
Consideration of poetry question.

7.00 The tutor began by reminding students of the question on 'The Long the Short and the Tall' (March 15th) and reading out some of the answers to this. He pointed out that there was no one correct way of answering, some students had concentrated on the theme of the play and some on the characters. Both approaches were acceptable as long as the answers were well argued.

A Sylvia Plath short story was given to the students, together with questions based on an interpretation of the passage. The students were given a quarter of an hour to read and to begin writing answers. Whilst they were doing this, the tutor walked around talking to them individually. Before the break the tutor went through the questions asking for answers from the students. He suggested that they complete the exercise for homework.

8.15 The tutor supplied a general poetry question which asked for consideration of a poem that had either made the reader happy or sad.

The students were asked to draw on their knowledge of poetry considered in class and highlight description and imagery. After being allowed some time for individual thought, the students were invited to share their ideas in a class discussion.

April 19th (Third Session of Summer Term)

Major topics: Consideration of an exam question on characters in set works.
Watching and discussing part of a video film on 'Of Mice and Men'.

7.00 The class began by discussing how best they could organise a further revision session. It was decided that the most helpful activity would be to watch some of the films based on the set work, which had been shown during the year.

The tutor gave back the essays written for homework. One of these he read out to the class and invited comments.

A question on the qualities of characters in the set works was then discussed. The students were encouraged to use examples from different plays and books. As the discussion developed some made notes on the comments of others.

8.15 After showing the first part of 'Of Mice and Men', the tutor invited comments on the interpretation of the characters by the actors.

April 24th (Extra revision session)

The tutor had organised the showing of three films in different rooms. The students chose which they wanted to watch. The tutor also made himself available for individual queries in a separate room.